

## **Illinois Department of Transportation Policy Regarding Consultation with Non-Metropolitan Officials**

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) recognizes the importance of the state-local partnership in delivering a safe and efficient transportation system. The department strives to promote a dynamic and effective working relationship with all local agencies in rural and small urban areas. In Illinois, the coordination of transportation activities between the state and local officials includes the entire transportation planning, programming and implementation process. While the consultation process in urbanized areas is very structured, state coordination with local agencies in rural and small urban areas follows a process that is more flexible in order to meet the needs of local officials.

The department proposes a consultation process that builds on its current efforts to work with local officials in rural areas. Utilizing current outreach methods, the department will consult with local officials on the allocation funding, transportation planning, highway and transit program development, project development and other transportation issues. The following sections outline how the department will implement this process.

### **Funding**

For highways, rural and small urban areas are funded from essentially the same sources that fund all highway investments in Illinois. For public transportation, some funding categories distinguish between urbanized areas and rural/small urban areas. In addition to various locally generated revenues, the federal and state funding sources that are available for rural and small urban transportation activities include:

- Federal Highway Funding – Interstate Maintenance; National Highway System; Surface Transportation Program, including the Enhancement Program, Highway Safety Improvement Program, and Rail Safety Program; Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program; Statewide Planning and Research (SPR); and other FHWA Discretionary Programs.
- Federal Transit Funding–Section 5311, Section 5310, Section 5309, Section 5307, Section 5313 (Technical Studies) and Job Access/Reverse Commute.
- State Highway Funding– Illinois Motor Fuel Tax (MFT); Economic Development Program; Truck Access Route Program; Grade Crossing Protection Program; County Consolidated Program; Needy Township Program; High Growth Cities Program; Township Bridge Program; Park Roads Program; State Planning Funds; and State Matching Assistance Program.
- State Transit Funding – Capital Assistance (GRF and Series "B" Bonds); State Operating Assistance; Fare Reimbursement for students, elderly persons and persons with disabilities; Department on Aging; Department of Health and Human Services; Rural Transit Assistance Program; and State Technical Studies.

The division of non-discretionary federal highway funds between the state and local agencies is determined by a formula that has been negotiated between the department and representatives of the local agencies (the Illinois Municipal League, the Illinois Association of County Engineers, etc.). In like manner, the division of non-discretionary state highway (MFT) funds between the state and local agencies is determined by a formula negotiated between the state and local agencies (including township officials) and codified by state statute.

The allocation of the state share of these funds is accomplished through the state highway programming process (see below). The distribution of the local share of the non-discretionary highway funds to the various local recipients is accomplished by formulas that utilize criteria such as population and roadway miles. Each local agency, in turn, develops its own program to utilize these funds.

The allocation of non-discretionary transit funds to the various rural and small urban transit providers is accomplished by an evaluation of population, regional distribution, ability to provide local resources and age of rolling stock.

The allocation of all discretionary funds is determined by the specific criteria established for the various federal and state discretionary programs. When appropriate, the department will seek input and comment from officials from all local units of government – urban and rural regarding these programs.

## **Planning**

The Illinois State Transportation Plan – Transportation Policies and Goals for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, establishes the essential transportation vision for the state. Updates to this plan will be developed in coordination with local officials. In addition, the department will provide significant opportunities for public review and input. A series of statewide public forums as well as outreach meetings for local officials will be used to establish the universe of priorities that the department will consider in developing the Plan. In addition, broad societal priorities outlined in applicable federal laws will be considered. The resulting policies and goals will be set forth in the plan and will form the foundation for all transportation programs developed in Illinois.

The department conducts corridor level planning and feasibility studies in those areas where state or local officials have identified a need for new or expanded state facilities. These studies will be coordinated closely with local decision makers to ensure that all input is considered.

Federal SPR and state planning funds will be available to rural and small urban agencies to conduct transportation planning/traffic studies. Local agency requests will be evaluated on a case by case basis with the resulting studies coordinated and reviewed by the department.

In rural and small urban areas adjacent to expanding urbanized areas, the department will promote interaction between those local officials and the adjacent Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). This interaction may take the form of participation in the appropriate MPO committees or it may involve joint studies between the MPO and the rural local officials.

Planning assistance for rural and small urban public transportation providers will be provided from the Rural Transit Assistance Program. This activity will provide both technical and administrative assistance to help providers better meet the needs of rural and small urban transit users. In addition, the department will coordinate its planning efforts with grants from the Illinois Department on Aging and the Illinois Department of Human Services used for public transportation planning activities in rural and small urban areas.

### **Programming**

Coordination and consultation with local officials in rural and small urban areas will occur at different levels, depending on the program in question. For the state highway program, local officials will have an opportunity to provide input directly to the department during the development of the program and indirectly, through their state representatives and senators, during the legislative review of the program.

The State Highway Program — The Multi-Year Highway Improvement Program (MYP) is a strategic planning document that lists all projects the department intends to accomplish over the next five to seven years and is constrained by the projected available resources. The MYP is developed on an annual basis and is consistent with the policies and goals identified in the State Transportation Plan.

Once resource allocation has been accomplished, the department's five regional engineers through the nine district offices develop, prioritize and submit candidate projects based on the needs of each region/district. It is at this point that the ongoing coordination with local officials (discussed below) will come into play.

Currently, each district maintains a continuous and cooperative relationship with state and local elected officials within the district. Regular meetings are held with mayors, municipal engineers, county board members, county engineers, township highway supervisors and state legislators to exchange information about needed improvements on the state highway system. During these meetings, local input will be sought to modify proposed improvements, suggest new ones and convey local opposition to any state proposals.

In many instances, local agencies coordinate with the regional/district offices on projects that involve both state and local jurisdiction. In these cases, the total project scope along with state-local cost sharing activities will be negotiated.

Once the regions/districts submit their candidate projects to the central office, the program is assembled and evaluated. Adjustments are made, as necessary, to maintain regional balance and to assure the overall program objectives are met. The Governor then approves the program for release and it is submitted to members of the Illinois General Assembly for their review and input.

The Local Roads Program — All municipalities, townships and counties develop their own local street and highway program to utilize the federal and state highway funds they receive. Local agencies will often supplement this program with locally generated funds. The local portion of the highway improvement program is developed using locally determined needs and priorities. The federal and state funded portion of the local program will be coordinated through the department to ensure that projects are eligible for the various funding sources, that applicable state and federal standards, policies and procedures are met and that the work is coordinated with state projects.

The Public Transportation Program – All rural and small urban transit providers receive federal operating assistance and are eligible for state and federal capital grants, when funds are available. Those rural and small urban transit providers that qualify under state statute also receive state operating assistance.

Similar to the local roads program, the public transportation program for rural and small urban areas is developed using locally determined needs and priorities. The various transit providers submit operating budgets and capital needs. The department reviews these budgets and capital needs individually with each provider. Funding will be provided at levels to maintain existing service and to accommodate strategic expansions of service.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) – This final step in the surface transportation programming process provides an additional opportunity for local official input. At this point, all three programs discussed above are integrated and subjected to a statewide public involvement process.

### **Project Development**

IDOT has been developing, over many years, methods for involving stakeholders in its decisions, and the department's Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) policy looks to make this a regular process for projects involving new construction, reconstruction and major expansion of transportation facilities. IDOT defines CSS as an interdisciplinary approach that seeks effective, multimodal transportation solutions by working with stakeholders to develop, build and maintain cost-effective transportation facilities which fit into and reflect the project's surroundings - its "context". Through early, frequent, and meaningful communication with stakeholders, and a flexible and creative approach to design, the resulting projects should improve safety and mobility for the traveling public, while seeking to preserve and enhance the scenic, economic, historic, and natural qualities of the settings through which they pass. The CSS approach would involve stakeholders early and often throughout the process, especially before major decisions are made. The information gained from partnering with stakeholders is then used by IDOT to craft an informed solution to the transportation issue. This informed solution should also be a consensus solution, between stakeholders and IDOT.

For local agency highway projects, each IDOT district office has dedicated staff to assist local officials in the planning, development and implementation of state and federal funded local highway projects. These offices will coordinate with rural officials on their projects.

For public transportation, all applications for transit funding will follow a public process. This process allows for public and local official input into the planning and implementation of public transportation services in rural and small urban areas. In addition, all applications and grant contracts will be approved by the local governing board of the public transportation operator.

### **Other Coordination Activities**

IDOT will be actively involved in statewide organizations representing municipalities, counties and townships. The Bureau of Local Roads will participate on an ongoing and continuous basis with several of the standing committees of each of these organizations. These committees and organizations meet with the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, the Director of Highways and the Director of Planning and Programming several times a year. These meetings will address a broad range of transportation policy issues and will provide local officials regular access to the principal decision makers within the department.

The department will be an active participant in statewide conferences hosted by the Illinois Association of County Engineers, the Illinois Municipal League, the American Public Works Association and the Township Officials of Illinois. In addition, district offices will host regular meetings with all the local agencies in their area.

In terms of public transportation, IDOT will participate on a regular basis in committees and task forces established by the Illinois Department on Aging and the Illinois Department of Human Services. The focus of these efforts will be to improve the coordination of all services, including public transportation, in rural and small urban areas. Participation in these committees will provide the department forums to discuss enhanced coordination of transportation services between state agencies, local officials and transit operators. The Department also serves as the co-vice chairman of the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Transportation. This committee encourages the coordination of public and private transportation services, with priority given to services directed toward those populations who are currently not served or who are underserved by existing public transit. The Committee will also seek innovative approaches to providing and funding local transportation services.